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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: GOR AT A LOSS AT GEORGIA'S REACTION TO THE JUSTICE
MINISTRY LETTER

REF: A. TBILISI 590

[1](#)B. MOSCOW 962

Classified By: CDA Daniel A Russell. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) MFA Fourth CIS Deputy Director Aleksey Pavlovskiy told us April 11 that the GOR was surprised at the GOG's "hysterical reaction" to the Russian Justice Ministry's letter to the GOG regarding the 35 Russian citizens detained in Abkhazia. According to Pavlovskiy, faced with a concrete case involving the Russians in custody in Abkhazia, who requested the GOR's assistance, the GOR followed international conventions and sought permission from the Georgian government to negotiate with the Abkhaz for their extradition to Russia. Pavlovskiy underlined that under normal circumstances, the two involved countries would reach an agreement according to international practices and nothing more, but Georgia could not "realistically" help the case under current circumstances and the extradition had to be worked out with the Abkhaz. Pavlovkiy asked, "To whom was this action harmful?"

[1](#)2. (C) Precisely because the GOR respected Georgia's territorial integrity and its de jure sovereignty over Abkhazia, the GOG sent the letter to the Georgian Ministry of Justice, rather than dealing "directly" with the Abkhaz. He asked what the GOG's alternative solution for the case would be. Ignoring the 35 Russian citizens would not be an acceptable option for the GOR while, with the negotiation process completely collapsed, the GOG would have no way of orchestrating their extradition.

[1](#)3. (C) Pavlovskiy criticized the GOG's "habitual" tactic of "going public." Recalling a recent press conference on WTO negotiations, where the Georgians leaked a working paper from the Russian side, Pavlovskiy expressed frustration that the Georgians publicized the letter between the two ministries through the Internet. The publication embarrassed the GOG more because the letter clearly showed the GOR's respect for Georgia's territorial integrity. He maintained that the GOR was resisting the temptation to reciprocate with a public statement. It would prefer a non-confrontational solution to the case.

[1](#)4. (C) Pavlovskiy claimed that neither Russia nor Abkhazia was interested in annexation. He said that in the aftermath of Kosovo independence, all GOR moves had been clearly explained numerous times, including during the February 21 Putin - Saakashvili meeting. In fact, the GOR has a standing invitation to the GOG to join in the removal of sanctions against Abkhazia, which had no reason to remain in isolation and economic stagnation. It was a stretch to see a grand scheme of annexation in a concrete case where the GOR was trying to be responsible for its own citizens, he added.

15. (C) In a separate conversation, MFA Fourth CIS Deputy Director Dmitriy Tarabrin said that Saakashvili's new plan would have been more convincing if it had been directed at the Abkhaz (ref B). When Georgian Charge d'Affaires Shugarov brought the official document of the peace plan to the MFA on April 3, he told GOR officials that it had not been shared with the Abkhaz. In the absence of direct engagement, the plan remained a PR action and could not be implemented, Tarabrin thought.

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